

Mumps

What are mumps?

Mumps is a disease caused by a virus that infects the salivary glands. This leads to swelling of the glands, usually in the neck.

Who gets mumps?

Mumps usually occurs in school-age children, although young adults may also catch the disease. Almost everyone born before 1957 has already had mumps. It usually occurs in late winter and spring.

What are the symptoms of mumps?

The main symptoms of mumps are fever, headache, and swelling and tenderness of one or more of the salivary glands, usually the ones located just below the front of the ear. Approximately one third of infected people do not exhibit symptoms.

How is mumps spread?

The virus that causes mumps is spread by direct contact with saliva and discharges from the nose and throat of infected persons. It can be spread by coughing, sneezing, or simply talking.

How soon after infection do symptoms occur?

The incubation period for mumps is usually 16 to 18 days, although it may vary from 12 to 25 days.

When and for how long is a person able to spread mumps to others?

A person with mumps is contagious from three days prior to until four days after the onset of symptoms.

Is there a vaccine for mumps?

There is a vaccine that is recommended for children at 12 months of age, with a second dose recommended at 4 to 6 years of age. This vaccine is given as a measles-mumps-rubella combination (MMR) vaccine.

Can older people receive the vaccine?

People of any age who are unsure of their mumps disease history and/or vaccination history should be vaccinated, especially if they are likely to be exposed to the disease, such as through their employment. Women should not get the vaccine if they are pregnant or plan to become pregnant within 3 months after receiving the vaccine.

Can someone who has been vaccinated get mumps?

The vaccine provides lifelong protection for 95% of people who receive one dose and to nearly 100% of people who receive the two doses.

Does past infection with mumps make a person immune?

Yes. Someone who has had mumps usually cannot get mumps again.

Are there any complications associated with mumps?

Sometimes the virus can infect other organs causing complications. In 20-30% of cases of mumps in adult men, the disease leads to infection of the testicles which causes swelling, pain, soreness, and a fever and can lead to sterility. Symptomatic meningitis, which includes fever, headache, and a stiff neck, occurs in up to 15% of patients. Encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) occurs in roughly 2 out of every 100,000 mumps patients. Deafness caused by mumps occurs in about 1 in every 20,000 cases.

What about mumps and pregnancy?

A pregnant woman should check with her doctor if she has been in contact with a person who has mumps or if she has symptoms of mumps. Pregnant women do not necessarily need to be excluded from a setting where cases of mumps are occurring since the risk to a pregnant woman depends on whether she is already immune (from previous illness or vaccination).

What can be done to prevent the spread of mumps?

The single most effective measure against mumps is maintaining the highest possible level of immunization in the community. Children should also not attend school during their infectious period if they contract mumps. Common sense measures, such as covering coughs and sneezes, washing hands frequently, and not sharing food or eating utensils can also help.

For questions about mumps, contact the Health and Human Services, Communicable Disease Control Section at 603-271-4496 or 1-800-852-3345 x4496. For further information, refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov or the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services website at www.dhhs.nh.gov.